

## **IDEA, IDENTITY, AND INTERSUBJECTIVE MEANS OF INDIA ACT EAST FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS TAIWAN**

**Ulul Azmiati Auliyah**

Department of International Relations  
Faculty of Economics and Social Science  
Universitas AMIKOM Yogyakarta  
Email : ululazmiauliyah@gmail.com

**Yoga Suharman**

Department of International Relations  
Faculty of Economics and Social Science  
Universitas AMIKOM Yogyakarta

**Seftina Kuswardini**

Department of International Relations  
Faculty of Economics and Social Science  
Universitas AMIKOM Yogyakarta

**Aditya Maulana Hasymi**

Department of International Relations  
Faculty of Economics and Social Science  
Universitas AMIKOM Yogyakarta

### **ABSTRAK**

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji alasan mengapa India tetap mempertahankan kerjasama dengan Taiwan melalui kebijakan "Act East", meskipun belum memberikan manfaat yang tinggi bagi India? Untuk menjawab pertanyaan tersebut, artikel ini menggunakan perspektif konstruktivisme terkait dengan analisis kebijakan luar negeri. Dalam analisis politik luar negeri konstruktivisme, ide dan identitas sangat penting bagi negara. "Act East" India terhadap Taiwan mencerminkan beberapa elemen konstruktivisme yang mencakup ide, identitas nasional dan sarana intersubjektif yang mempengaruhi preferensi, pilihan kebijakan dan kepentingan negara. Yang pertama, "Act East" India adalah ide untuk menghidupkan kembali hubungan strategis dan historis dengan Taiwan. Kedua, proses intersubjektif India-Taiwan yang positif membentuk pemahaman bersama berdasarkan nilai-nilai kebebasan, demokrasi, hak asasi manusia, dan norma. Ketiga, identitas nasional sebagai emerging power menempatkan India untuk hidup berdampingan secara damai dengan Taiwan dan menjaga keamanan serta stabilitas di kawasan.

Keywords: Constructivism, Foreign Policy, Act East, India, Taiwan.

### **ABSTRACT**

*This article aims to examine the reason why India is continuing to maintain cooperation with Taiwan through the "Act East" policy, even though it has not provided high benefits for India? In order to answer*

*the question, this article employed a constructivism perspective related to foreign policy analysis. In constructivism foreign policy analysis, ideas and identity are vital for the state. India's "Act East" towards Taiwan reflects some element of constructivism which encompass ideas, national identity, and intersubjective means that influences preference, policy choice, and state interest. The first, India's "Act East" is an idea to revive strategic and historical relations with Taiwan. Second, the positive India-Taiwan intersubjective process formed a shared understanding based on the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and norms. Third, the national identity as an emerging power puts India to coexist peacefully with Taiwan and maintain security as well as stability in the region.*

Keywords: Konstruktivisme, Kebijakan Luar Negeri, Act East, India, Taiwan

## **INTRODUCTION**

India's foreign policy, known as Look East in the 1990s, has morphed into Act East policy during the government of Narendra Modi since 2014. It is distinct from the Look East Policy in terms of the 'geographical scope' and 'strategic depth' (Vanvari & Tan, 2021). The changing term implies that India has expanded their foreign policy projection which encompasses establishing cooperative relations and reviving political ties, strengthening economic relations, deepening regional security, and ensuring strategic cooperation in Southeast Asia, the Pacific, and East Asia (Ekaputra & Hennida, 2021; Mazumdar, 2021; Zulafqar, 2019). In East Asia, Taiwan is one of India's Act East partners amidst the absence of formal diplomatic ties (Hashmi, 2020; Karackattu, 2019; Roy, 2022; Shah, 2018) and under the "shadow of the China's dragon" (Nagda, 2020).

India has established bilateral relations and cooperation with Taiwan since the establishment of the Look East policy. This includes the establishment of the India-Taipei Association (ITA) in 1995; and the establishment of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Center (TECC) in New Delhi (Chattaraj, 2019). The cooperation aims to facilitate cooperation in the fields of business, tourism, culture, science, and technology, as well as exchanges between people. Along with developments, various institutions and agreements agreed upon by both countries have expanded, including the "Double Tax Avoidance Agreement" and the "Customs Assistance Agreement" in July 2011; the opening of TECC's second office in Chennai India in December 2012; opening of Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) offices from Taiwan in several parts of India including Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai; and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Taiwan chamber of commerce and

the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in June 2016 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). A series of agreements and institutions facilitates economic cooperation both countries. Since the establishment of Act East Policy, India and Taiwan have quietly developed a robust economic relationship coupled with an expanding political interaction in the midst of "China's shadow." In December 2021, both countries began negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement focused on developing India into a semiconductor manufacturing hub. According to Taiwan envoys to India, bilateral trade hit new records in 2021 at over \$7 billion, and of over 120 Taiwanese companies are operating in India with cumulative investments over \$2.3 billion (Smith, 2022).

Another economic cooperation between India and Taiwan is an investment. The total investment coming from Taiwan to India in 2020 is \$11.1 billion. The investment figure from Taiwan to India is still quite low considering the investment flows made by Taiwan to other countries and regions in 2020, such as to Hong Kong with an investment value of \$83.4 billion, South Korea with \$32.4 billion, Singapore with \$32.3 billion, and Thailand \$19 billion (The World Bank, 2022). This shows that the investment made by India and Taiwan is also still relatively low and has not contributed optimally to the value of economic cooperation for India.

Research related to India-Taiwan relations has been carried out, including The Case for a Pragmatic India-Taiwan Partnership in 2019 which stated that cooperation between the two countries tends to be dominated by pragmatic interests (Karackattu, 2019). The next research discussing India-Taiwan cooperation was written by Sriparna Pathak with the title India-Taiwan Economic Relations: Charting a New Path (Pathak & Hazarika, 2020) which emphasized that the relationship between the two countries was based on efforts to strengthen economic connectivity. Both of these studies generally emphasize the material dimension rather than the non-material dimension. The absence of Act East India's foreign policy research on Taiwan has been studied from a constructivist perspective or in a non-material dimension, prompting the author to study further.

Examined from trade data, the cooperation both of countries has not contributed optimally to the Indian economy and has even reduced (Pant & Matto, 2022). Trade data in the 2014-2021 Act East policy period, India's trade contribution with Taiwan is 0.8% or \$49.9 billion of India's total trade. Compare this with India's trade with Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia,

Hong Kong, and Vietnam, each of which has almost the same GDP, which is larger than Taiwan (figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. The trade data for India, and Taiwan Compared with the other Countries

	India-Taiwan	India-Thailand	India-Singapura	India-Malaysia	India-Hongkong	India-Vietnam
<b>GDP 2021 (billion)</b>	\$789,5	\$500,2	\$396,9	\$372,7	\$368,1	\$342,9
<b>Trade 2014-2021 (billion)</b>	\$49,9	\$86,6	\$169,6	\$125,8	\$199,2	\$91,3
<b>Trade 2014-2021 (%)</b>	0,8%	1,4%	2,7%	2,0%	3,2%	1,4%

Source: Countryeconomy.com, 2021

Figure 2. The Development of India's trade with Taiwan before and during "Act East"

<b>Before "Act East"</b>									
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Average
<b>Total to Taiwan (US\$)</b>	\$2,59	\$4,13	\$4,37	\$4,49	\$6,26	\$8,17	\$7,0	\$6,03	\$5,38
<b>Total to India (US\$)</b>	\$312,14	\$414,75	\$488,98	\$467,09	\$619,58	\$795,27	\$790,98	\$764,59	\$581,67
<b>India-Taiwan Trade (%)</b>	0,8	1	0,9	0,9	1	1	0,88	0,78	0,9
<b>During "Act East"</b>									
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
<b>Total to Taiwan (US\$)</b>	\$6,2	\$4,78	\$5,32	\$6,08	\$7,18	\$5,72	\$5,65	\$8,99	\$6,24
<b>Total to India (US\$)</b>	\$758,3	\$642,09	\$658,82	\$769,05	\$844,14	\$788,06	\$686,24	\$1.034,4	\$772,65
<b>India-Taiwan Trade (%)</b>	0,8	1	0,9	0,9	1	1	0,88	0,78	0,9

Source: <https://tradestat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/iecnttopnq.asp>

According to the data above, it can be seen that in the period before the "Act East" policy, India's trade with Taiwan reached 0.9%, in contrast, during the "Act East" policy period, India's trade with Taiwan was only able to reach 0.8%. "India and Taiwan's economic relationship is much smaller than it should be. Overall bilateral trade in 2017–2018 was roughly the same as 2013–2014 levels, although the year-on-year numbers reveal a temporary dip in the interim period (Karackattu, 2019). So, it can be argued that the contribution of Taiwan's trade to India during the "Act East" seems considerably low when compared to the Look East policy period and the other countries (Vanvari & Tan, 2021).

India-Taiwan trade statistics during the "Act East" period and earlier show that the contribution of Taiwan's trade to India during the "Act East" was lower and sluggish (Shah, 2018) when compared to the Look East policy period and to other countries (Vanvari & Tan, 2021). However, India still continues to cooperate with Taiwan even though it has not yet gained significant advantages. This raises the question, why did India continue to cooperate with Taiwan through the "Act East" policy even though the material value achieved was much lower than the "Look East" period? Compared to traditional theories of international relations, such as Realism and Liberalism, profit maximization and material dimension are always used as their main analysis of foreign policy as well as state preferences, behavior, and policy choices. The Act East policy is also risky for India given China's influence in the East Asian region. Are there non-material factors other than rational considerations that drive India to cooperate with Taiwan under China's shadow?

## **METHOD**

This research was studied qualitatively. According to Creswell (2013), the qualitative approach aims to explore and understand a phenomenon by searching for relevant sources of information in the form of words or texts which are then collected and analyzed (Creswell, 2013; Raco, 2010). Qualitative methods are also part of the interpretivist paradigm that views social reality as something dynamic, processed, and full of subjective meaning as the result of social construction (Rahardjo, 2018). Furthermore, this research is explanatory because it aims to answer the 'why' question (Mas'oeed, 1994).

The data collection technique of this research was carried out by exploring sources from the internet and literature studies. The data used are documents and reports from government websites that provide supporting data for the Act East policy in the context of India's relations with Taiwan, as well as data sourced from articles, publication journals, books, and websites with still consider the relevance, validity, and reliability of each reference.

To support the argument against the answers to the research questions examined in this study, we draw upon the viewpoints of scholars and claims of a constructivist perspective on foreign policy analysis. This study underscores the importance of ideas and identities in the East India Act as non-material factors driving India's foreign policy behavior towards Taiwan. The question of why India persists in continuing unfavorable cooperative relations with Taiwan

in this study seeks to find an explanation of the things that underlie Act East's behavior in the midst of the absence of formal diplomatic relations and the shadow of China.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Constructivism Foreign Policy***

Foreign policy is defined as a set of interests, strategies, and ideas in interacting with other actors or countries that are used to achieve goals, as well as available resources used by a country in guiding its interactions with other countries (AS, 2018). In the study of constructivism, foreign policy is one form of the phenomenon of international relations that cannot be separated from the ideational elements contained in it. This is in line with Wendt's opinion that all international phenomena such as diplomacy, war, peace, and so on including foreign policy are social constructions made by actors (Wendt, 1999). Thus, this study uses constructivism theory in elaborating Act East's foreign policy which includes three aspects, namely ideas, intersubjective processes, and identity construction.

First, the structure of key states is determined more by intersubjective than by material elements (Wendt, 1999). Ideas become an important element because they determine the meaning of the foreign policy. The view of constructivism is that all phenomena in the world are not objective material realities or exist naturally or innately, but are always social products of the role of ideas (Wendt, 1995). Without the role of ideas and meanings, material foreign policy will not mean anything. On the other hand, ideas will not function or become meaningless if they are not represented in physical or tangible forms (Wendt, 1999). In this context, ideas or ideas about foreign policy cannot be separated from the influence of history, culture, and state ideology from the actors themselves. Because these factors are part of the ideational elements used to analyze the social reality that occurs. Constructivist see foreign policy as a socially constructed with ideational elements.

Second, ideas or ideas in foreign policy influence the intersubjective process between actors. The intersubjective process is defined as a shared understanding or belief that influences the actor's perspective in establishing relationships with other actors. Wendt (1999) suggests that state behavior reflected in foreign policy is determined by the meanings given to these objects (Wendt, 1999). Meaning is also constructed by a combination of specific and complex historical ideas, norms, and beliefs from interacting actors (Fathiraini, 2019).

Therefore, as stated by Wendt, the intersubjective process that occurs ultimately forms three cultures of interaction between actors in the international system, namely Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian cultures (Wendt, 1999, 2000). Hobbesian culture is defined as a situation in which states see each other as enemies, resulting in war. Lockean culture is defined as a state in which states view each other as competitors so that states compete with each other to advance their interests. Lockean culture fuels tension but still has limited by not making war the ultimate goal. And lastly, Kantian culture is defined as a state in which countries see each other as friends, resulting in cooperation (Hadiwinata, 2017; Jackson & Sorensen, 2016; Wendt, 1994).

Third, foreign policy as a representation of state behavior is in line with the national identity it believes in. National identity is defined as an ideational element generated by the history of a country and the interaction of a country with other countries. State identities and interests are largely constructed by these social structures, rather than being given exogenously to the system by human nature as neorealist maintain or domestic politics supported by neoliberalism in international relations (Wendt, 1999). In other words, their perception of the outside world is framed by power and economic interests. Meanwhile, constructivists argue that the identity of actors is heterogeneous because the culture and international environment that shape their identities are different (Ametbek, 2022).

Hudson (1999) suggests that national identity is an ideational element produced by the history of a country originating from the interaction of a country with other countries in a certain period (Manikam & Puspitasari, 2021). More broadly, Reus-Smit explains that identity is formed from ideas, values, and norms from the social environment in which the state acts so that interests are a reflection of the identity obtained (Reus-Smit cited by Permata, 2019). Therefore, this illustrates that national identity determines national interests and state behavior as social norms that become standards of behavior for state actors by the given identity (Theys, 2017).

Constructivism provides alternative ideas in analyzing the formation of a country's foreign policy. The foreign policy of the East India Act shows that it is not only an effort to achieve material economic, political and military interests, but it can be studied more deeply that there are non-material factors that encourage India to internalize its foreign policies towards Taiwan. This research will significantly look at the relations between India and Taiwan without formal diplomatic tie. Therefore, the focus of the discussion of India-Taiwan relations

will be studied through the development of a constructivist approach to analyzing domestic politics by taking three non-material aspects of constructivism itself, namely ideas, intersubjective processes, and identity construction.

### ***Idea Element of Act East Policy***

Act East policy in the sense of constructivism is a social product that cannot be separated from the aspect of ideas. The constructivism perspective emphasizes the ideational element as the main analytical study in analyzing a state's foreign policy. Although emphasizing the ideational element, it does not mean eliminating the material element as a motivation for state behavior. Ideas are important elements because they give meaning to the actions and behavior of state actors. This is influenced, among other things, by the history, culture, and ideas of policy-making actors. In this context, the Act East policy includes the notion that underlies the Indian origin of this policy. Of course, to analyze the idea of the Act East Policy, one must first analyze the previous policy idea, namely the Look East Policy.

The policy idea of Look East, as well as India's Act East cannot be separated from the historical ties that have existed for a long time between India and Southeast Asia, and East Asia. At the end of the pre-colonial period, India's relations with Asia can be found in the historical traces of trade between the two kingdoms on the east coast of India and the kingdoms of Southeast Asia over several centuries. In the era before independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first leader, became an actor who played an active role in fighting for a new world order that was free from exploitation and based on the concept of mutual respect between nations. India-Taiwan relations have been mirrored by Jawaharlal Nehru with Chiang Kai-Shek, a Taiwanese Nationalist leader, who from the 1920-1940s Nehru and Chiang both fought against colonialism and supported the rise of Asian nations in the world.

Act East's policy ideas are also influenced by cultural ties. India has close cultural ties to Southeast Asia and East Asia. For example, India is the origin of Buddhism and Hinduism which was then spread so that many countries around it were influenced by these religions. Including Taiwan which is influenced by Buddhism which is now the religion of the majority of Taiwanese people (Madan et al., 2014). The cultural and religious ties that have been formed are not just past historical relationships but have been considered as a "living links" and "living



common heritage" (Brahma, 2018; Hussain, 2017). So, this is then a factor used in Act East's policy rhetoric to build a sense of togetherness between India and East Asian countries.

Another idea in interpreting Act East policy-making is the character of Indian policy-making actors. Prime Minister Modi's personality plays an important role in influencing the formulation of India's foreign policy. Prime Minister Modi has an additional character in which for him India's foreign policy should be continued and improved for better optimization. Therefore, the Act East policy is not a stand-alone policy but is a rooted continuation of the Look East policy formulated under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. The Act East policy is proof that Prime Minister Modi is an actor who has not left a legacy of the east-oriented policies that India's past leaders have built. Later, when Prime Minister Narasimha Rao initiated the Look East policy, Rao stated that the Look East policy emphasized a very old and strong point of India's historical and cultural ties and there was nothing new in India apart from wanting to strengthen cooperative relations with its neighbors in the region (Muni, 2011).

The explanation above can be said that the shared historical and cultural ties have become the basis of India's interactions and contacts with Southeast Asia and East Asia, including Taiwan. As Prime Minister Narasimha Rao pointed out, the Look East policy emphasizes the very old and strong points of India's historical and cultural ties and there is nothing new in India other than wanting to strengthen cooperative relations with its eastern neighbors (Muni, 2011). Therefore, Act East policy is not only understood as India's policy to promote trade, culture, connectivity, and capacity building with Southeast Asian, East, and Pacific countries through strategic cooperation to gain material benefits, but is a set of India's vision to re-establish diplomatic tie with countries and the East Asian region, including relations with Taiwan.

### ***The Sense of Identity in India's "Act East"***

National identity is one of the ideational elements built through a long process based on the historical framework and social processes of a country. As Hudson (1999) said, the formation of national identity is influenced by the history of the state and the interaction of the state with other countries in a certain period (Manikam & Puspitasari, 2021). In this context, Indian identity is an image of oneself and of other countries that are constructed both at the domestic and international levels.

The formation of Indian identity in the domestic sphere has been constructed based on a long history of civilization and civilization-based culture and traditions (Ray, 2017). The long history of great civilizations over the last 3000 years has had a tremendous influence on society, the Indian political elite, and the nations of Asia around it, regarding India as a modern nation and state with global power (Cohen, 2001). Apart from historical factors, India's potential to become a great country is also built by India's resources which include: 1) broad demographic size, thus making Indian society and political elites believe that India should play an important role in the international system; 2) Indian Hinduism, states that India has the destiny to become a great country in the international system (Manikam & Puspitasari, 2021). India, which has an economic power that rose after the cold war, was able to make India start to take part in every international agenda. Because of this bargaining power, it finally gave India the confidence to image itself as an emerging power.

India's identity as an emerging power has been believed for a long time by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who later became a spirit for Indian leaders up to the current Narendra Modi Government. Nehru (1956) stated:

*"India, constituted as she is, cannot play a secondary part in the world. She will either count for a great deal or not count at all. No middle position attracted me. Nor did I think any intermediate position feasible."*

The identity of the new power has played a major role in India to promote and maintain a peaceful and stable external environment, so that countries can build their domestic economy quickly and unimpeded (Pant, 2009). According to India, the international world order should be characterized by five conditions, namely, international unity in diversity, state ownership, enlightened self-interest, non-violence, and non-discrimination. Therefore, India imaged itself as a friendly, responsible, non-threatening power, which respects responsibilities and does not seek to dominate or bully other countries (Wojczewski, 2018).

India is also increasingly playing an active role in every international agenda as a form of implementation of its identity. India is the largest democracy in the world. As a democracy, India must also support the values embodied in democracy. India has proven that its country has succeeded in integrating its pluralism and diversity which can become a model for other countries. Moreover, along with democracy, India supports the principle of global governance based on multilateralism (Bava, 2007). India builds international cooperation with many state

actors, including BRICS which consists of members of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as an organization that accommodates countries that have economic power by carrying out and fostering a stable and peaceful world order that provide security and prosperity; The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) cooperation initiated by India and Japan to promote socio-economic development in Asia and Africa; The ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA) cooperation, as well as many other collaborations. The objectives of participating and establishing multilateral cooperation above are India's implementation to support global governance based on multilateralism. The same meaning can also be applied in the case of the Act East India cooperation with Taiwan, which of course is India's implementation effort to preserve international norms, namely upholding cooperation with various state actors like a democratic country.

Emerging power is an identity that contains a great responsibility. There is an expression that state "with great power comes great responsibility" which means that with a great identity there is also a great responsibility (Kenkel & Destradi, 2019). The identity of emerging powers has given India the responsibility to maintain the stability of the international system based on existing norms. Therefore, to make this happen, India must secure the international system by keeping the world from being polarized and non-hegemonic (Bava, 2007). Through multilateral and bilateral cooperation with Taiwan, it is India's role to maintain a non-polarized external environment.

In foreign policy, national identity ultimately becomes the basis of the state in achieving national interests through its foreign policy. The Indian policy narrated as Act East policy is a projection of India to play an active role in every international agenda. The Act East India policy contains historical values of Indian civilization, Indian culture, and the history of interaction between Asian and Indian actors which reflects India's efforts to become a global power that is friendly, responsible, respects diversity, and is a peaceful power.

India's initiation of cooperation with Taiwan under the Act East policy framework reflects India's efforts to promote the values of peace and stability in the region through international cooperation and sustainable growth. In addition, India-Taiwan cooperation is also based on Prime Minister Modi's philosophy which reads Sab ka Saath, Sab ka Vikas which means together with all and development for all (Manikam, 2019). This philosophy means that India positions itself as a global power that upholds international cooperation without

discrimination to realize shared development. Like India's notion of world order, i.e. enlightened self-interest, which means India believes that, to achieve its national interests, India must help other countries in realizing its national interests as well (Wojczewski, 2018). This belief became one of the reasons India cooperated with Taiwan. In addition, India's relationship with Taiwan as a 'friend' encourages India as an emerging power to maintain its external environment to remain peaceful and stable.

Act East India's policy towards Taiwan can be regarded as India's attempt to fulfill its role as an emerging power. Having this national identity requires India to be the main actor in world peace, especially the peace and stability of countries in the region, namely East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indo-Pacific. India's cooperation with Taiwan at this time has not had a major impact on India's economic development. However, India's continuity in cooperating with Taiwan is nothing but an effort to peacefully coexist with Taiwan as one of the country's tasks as an emerging power.

### ***Intersubjective Meaning between India and Taiwan***

Intersubjective is defined as a shared understanding or belief that influences the perspective of actors in establishing relationships with other actors. In the intersubjective process between countries, the historical aspect as one of the ideational elements contributes to the construction of a shared understanding between one actor and another. Based on a series of phases of interaction that have taken place, India has had a long historical relationship with Taiwan. The phases that provide the frequency of interaction between India-Taiwan are the India-Taiwan interaction phase before the Act East policy period and during the Act East policy period.

The phase of the India-Taiwan intersubjective process had been established before the Act East policy period when Narendra Modi and Tsai Ing-Wen were before becoming leaders of their respective regions. Currently, India is led by Prime Minister Modi since 2014 and Taiwan by Tsai Ing-Wen since 2016, both of whom personally have had close interactions with each other. In 1999, when he was Secretary General of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), Modi visited Taiwan. Then, in 2011, when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat (2002-2014), Modi held a business event inviting a high-level Taiwanese business delegation to come to Gujarat India (Chaudhury, 2014). The Taiwan business delegation's visit to India was led by Christina Y. Liu,

Taiwan's Minister of Economic Planning, and was the largest business delegation from Taiwan to India with 80 delegates attending. In his welcoming speech, Modi said, "Taiwan and Gujarat are made for each other" (Express News Service, 2011). This expression reflects that Modi already has a personal view of Taiwan (Singh, 2017). A similar action was taken by Tsai Ing-Wen before becoming the president of Taiwan by visiting India in 2012. Tsai visited India and met Modi, which showed that the two had familiarity, respect, and empathy for each other (Singh, 2017). These phases formed a positive intersubjective relationship between the two countries which later influenced India in defining the meaning of Taiwan as "friend".

The next phase of the intersubjective process took shape in the Act East policy period. Starting with Modi's inauguration as Prime Minister, India invited the Taiwanese side to attend the Indian Prime Minister's inauguration ceremony in May 2014. From the Taiwanese side, Tien Chungkwang, a head of TECC in India since 2013 (Hashmi, 2021). Likewise with Taiwan, during Tsai's inauguration as President of Taiwan in May 2016, India was represented by a BJP official, while BJP Secretary General Ram Madhav congratulated Tsai and Taiwan via tweet (Smith, 2022). At its peak, the frequency of interaction between India and Taiwan was when the India-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Forum was formed on December 16, 2016. The Parliamentary Friendship Forum is an action by India at the political level to forge closer relations between members of the Indian Parliament and the Taiwan Legislative Body. The establishment of the India-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Forum was followed by a series of banquets attended by the Indian Parliament, Harish Chander Meena, and the head of the India Forum, PD Rai, and Taiwan's representative to India, Chungkwang Tien. On that occasion, the representative from Taiwan, Chungkwang Tian delivered his speech (Ghosh, 2017) which read:

*"India was important for Taiwan, that both countries shared the same values in human rights, democracy and free markets, and that his government's New Southbound Policy of economic diversification would concentrate more on India in the coming months and years."*

Tien's speech was then responded by PD Rai, Head of the India Forum, by revealing (Ghosh, 2017) that:

*"India could also learn much from Taiwan in terms of the latter's ability to manage a very large neighbour. In that context, he even asserted that Taiwan's New Southbound Policy*

*neatly fits with India's Act East policy. Hence, the strategic dimension of the India-Taiwan relationship was evident to all."*

The continuity of India-Taiwan relations was again demonstrated by India's participation in attending the re-inauguration of Tsai in her second term as President of Taiwan 2020-2024. Meenakshi Lekhi and Rahul Kaswan, two BJP lawmakers, attended Tsai's virtual inauguration ceremony and praised Taiwan as a democratic country. Meenakshi Lekhi sent a video message in which his message expressed hope for Tsai to continue to strengthen comprehensive relations between India and Taiwan (Krishnan, 2020). The presence of Indian representatives at the inauguration of the President of Taiwan is proof that the Indian government has good relations with the Taiwan government. Good relations like "friends" were also shown again by India on National Taiwan Day. On October 10, 2020, India through a spokesperson for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), placed a poster near the Chinese embassy in New Delhi that read "Taiwan Happy National Day October 10" to congratulate Taiwan on its 109th National Day. The congratulations from India then received a response from President Tsai via his tweet (The Wire Staff, 2020) which read:

*"Thank you to all of our dear friends in India for your well wishes on. Together, we can take pride in safeguarding our shared values like freedom & human rights, & defending our democratic way of life".*

The expressions above describe the form of activity of shared understanding between India and Taiwan. This proves that the friendship or friendship between India and Taiwan has continued to this day. The intersubjective process also takes place in the realm of the ideas of the parties currently in power in each of the India-Taiwan regions. Prime Minister Modi is a member of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) party. BJP is one of the parties in India that is built on the foundation of Indian history and civilization. BJP is of the view that Indian nationality comes from within the cultural ties of society that puts aside differences in caste, region, religion, and language which are termed cultural nationalism or Bharatiyata, or Hindutva. In his foreign policy, BJP Modi emphasized soft power diplomacy on the values of Indian civilization to build relationships with many partners and improve India's position in the world (Vaishnav, 2019). Meanwhile, President Tsai is a figure from the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party). The DPP is a pro-Taiwanese independence party. According to the DPP, Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country. Therefore, the ideas he brought were democratic reform,

ethnic justice, and Taiwanese self-determination. To realize their party's ideas, Tsai and Taiwan must expand their role in the international community, seek international recognition, and cooperate with many partners or other international organizations (Kaohsiung, 1999). The two parties above have ideologies that are motivated by different conditions. However, in its main objective, both India's BJP and Taiwan's DPP have the same idea, namely as parties that share the awareness to cooperate with other countries, especially countries or regions that have a common understanding of democratic values. In this respect, India and Taiwan are two democratic regions. Therefore, there is no reason for both countries to reject relationship and cooperation.

From the start, Prime Minister Modi and President Tsai shared a shared belief in the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law that continued to strengthen bilateral relations between the two (Krishnan, 2020). India-Taiwan respects the historical bond that has been built by the government and civil society actors between the two by upholding the values of democracy and diversity which have become the main principles for collective growth. Moreover, Modi and Tsai's friendly relations has been existed long before becoming the leaders of India and Taiwan, thus providing a strong foundation for India and Taiwan to continue to cooperate under the policy framework of Act East India.

A series of interactions that have been carried out between India and Taiwan illustrates that the two regions are constructing each other to build closer relations. Although, India's trade with Taiwan has not increased before the Act East policy reached 0.9%, now during the Act East policy, it is only able to reach 0.8% of India's total trade with other countries in the world. In addition, every interaction that exists between India and Taiwan must also be faced with strong warnings sent by China to India and Taiwan to continue to respect the one-China policy. However, due to the positive intersubjective process formed between the two as a friendly relationship, as well as the formation of a common understanding as an area that upholds the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law that are formed in the beliefs of the actors during the process of mutual interaction, then this is what finally prompted India to continue to cooperate with Taiwan even though it had not yet reached a significant level of trade and investment.

## **CONCLUSION**

Act East policy is a policy used by India to establish relations with countries and regions in East Asia, one of which is Taiwan. Relations between India and Taiwan have been established since 1995 and have economic cooperation. Judging from the data on the development of India-Taiwan trade and investment, the results of the cooperation between the two have not significantly increased economic achievements. However, this condition does not dampen the continuation of India's cooperation with Taiwan.

India's policy to continue to cooperate with Taiwan is due to the following three things. First, the idea of Act East policy is India's effort to revive relations with countries in East Asia and one of them is to revive bilateral relations with Taiwan that have existed for a long time before India's independence. Second, the interaction process between India-Taiwan resulted in the definition of the relationship between the two as a friendly relationship which is manifested through the frequency of meetings between the two, which in turn forms an intersubjective process or shared understanding of the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law that continues to grow. Third, India's national identity as an emerging power indirectly gives India the responsibility to image itself as an actor who maintains stability and peace in the region and the world.

India's continuity in cooperating with Taiwan is none other than India's efforts to peacefully coexist with Taiwan as one of the tasks as an emerging powers. What's more, the heating up of India's relations with China due to border conflicts that have not improved and China's attitude which India views as having militarized the Taiwan Strait has encouraged India to continue to strengthen relations with Taiwan. Through a constructivism approach, India's foreign relations is not only to gain mathematical advantages but are created because of the similarity of values that are intertwined by both parties. The tension between India and China due to border conflicts that have been going on for decades, the lack of shared values of freedom and democracy, and opposing alliances between the two have given the nuances of conflict that are embedded in India-China relations. India believes that the mutual understanding between India and Taiwan on the values of freedom and democracy as well as the close historical factors between the two have become an important foundation for the two of them to continue to maintain increasingly close foreign relations.



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